

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20
/077 W

-----122586 060802Z /11

R 042200Z APR 78
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 243
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMCONSUL TORONTO

UNCLAS MONTREAL 611

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT TORIES LOOKING FOR GAINS IN QUEBEC

1. JOE CLARK HELD PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY IN MONTREAL WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT UP FOR A WEEK AS FORUM FOR ANNOUNCING "PRESTIGIOUS" NEW CANDIDATES. IT PROVED TO BE A NON-EVENT. ONLY ONE "NAME" CANDIDATE WAS ANNOUNCED, AND SOME PROMINENT MONTREALERS ABOUT WHOM SPECULATION HAD BEEN BREWING WERE CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE.

2. ANDRE PAYETTE, NOTED NEWSCASTER AND TELEVISION PERSONALITY -- AND EX-HUSBAND OF LISE PAYETTE, PQ MINISTER -- WAS ONE OF THOSE INTRODUCED AT MEETING. OTHER THREE CANDIDATES NAMED ARE PROBABLY KNOWN ONLY TO THEIR FRIENDS, BUT ONE OF THEM, ROBERT LETENDRE, IS DESCRIBED BY PRESS AS "HIGH FUNCTIONARY" IN FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

3. CLARK ASSERTED THAT IF TORIES TAKE FIVE SEATS IN QUEBEC IT WILL BE ENOUGH (GIVEN PC LEAD OVER LIBERALS IN OTHER PROVINCES) TO FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. HE CLAIMED TO BE CONFIDENT OF AT LEAST FIVE SEATS AND DECLARED THAT UP TO THIRTY-FIVE WERE POSSIBLE. HE BASED THIS OPTIMISM ON THE DISARRAY OF THE
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SOCIAL CREDITISTES SINCE THE DEATH OF REAL CAQUETTE, THE COMBINATION OF A "STRONG" TORY TEAM AND ELECTORAL PLATFORM, AND THE FAILURE OF THE TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT VIS-A-VIS BOTH THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE AND THE ECONOMY. HE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT SOME OF THE PRESENT SOCRED MP'S WILL RUN UNDER THE PC BANNER, BUT DID NOT SAY WHICH.

4. AMONG THE MISSING WERE LOUIS DESMARAIS, WHOSE POTENTIAL CANDIDACY HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN REPORTED, AND JEAN DE GRANDPRE, CHAIRMAN OF BELL CANADA, ABOUT WHOM RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. DESMARAIS ANNOUNCED, AS DID CLARK FOR HIM, THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO DECIDE YET WHICH WAS MORE IMPORTANT -- RUNNING FOR COMMONS OR CONTINUING HIS WORK AGAINST THE REFERENDUM AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR CANADIAN UNITY. JEAN DE GRANDPRE HAS TOLD ME THERE NEVER WAS ANY SUBSTANCE TO RUMORS OF HIS ENTERING POLITICS. (ABOUT A YEAR AGO HE TURNED DOWN SUGGESTIONS HE TRY FOR THE QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP.) HE IS, IN HIS OWN WORDS, "NOT CUT OUT FOR IT."

5. COMMENT: THIS PUBLIC COUNTING OF CHICKENS BEFORE THE EGGS ARE LAID WILL, OF COURSE, DO NOTHING TO ENHANCE THE TORY IMAGE IN THIS PROVINCE. MOREOVER, DESMARAIS' BACKING OUT AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR (HE HAD TOLD ME PERSONALLY THAT HE INTENDED TO RUN) MAY PROMPT A LOT OF SECOND THOUGHTS AMONG ANY OTHER "PRESTIGE" CANDIDATES CLARK MAY HAVE HOPED TO CORRAL. HARPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTRE00611
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780148-0604
Format: TEL
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780495/aaaadcyl.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 21ae09b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3082711
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TORIES LOOKING FOR GAINS IN QUEBEC
TAGS: PINT, CA, (CLARK, JOE), (PAYETTE, ANDRE), (LETENDRE, ROBERT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/21ae09b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014